



## Teaching Communication Skills: A five year experience from a private medical school of Nepal

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### Abstract

Communication with the patient is an art. A medical professional can earn a lot of degrees but communicating with the patient always remains a problem for some of them. Communication plays a key role to make him/her successful in Life. Communication Skill is an important part of the pharmacology teaching and learning session followed at Manipal College of Medical Sciences. Most of the textbooks that are commonly followed in Nepal merely tell about communication skills. In Communication Skills it is taught that how to speak/communicate with the patient right from the beginning when a student is admitted to the medical school. This activity makes the student confident. Some of the important concepts of Communication Skill are mentioned in this paper.

Keywords: Communication Skill, Pharmacology.

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### Background

Manipal College of Medical Sciences, Pokhara which is the first private medical college of Nepal established on February 1994 in collaboration between the Manipal Group and the Government of Nepal. It is affiliated to the Kathmandu University [1]. Students are from India, Sri Lanka USA, Canada, Africa, Bangladesh and other countries. In Nepal Medical education is an integrated teaching of four and half years for MBBS degree [2-5]. Communication skills are taught in the first two years under Pharmacology [6].

The author was the first MD Pharmacology post graduate student from MCOMS has joined on 2008 as a MD Pharmacology resident. He is actively involved in teaching and learning process of Communication Skill since then. After completing his MD Pharmacology in 2011, currently he is working as a faculty member in MCOMS [1]. The technique of

Communication Skill that is followed in this institution has been discussed in this paper.

Communication with the patient is an art. A medical professional can earn a lot of degrees but communicating with the patient it always remains a problem for some of them. Communication plays a key role to make him/her successful in Life. It is an important part of the pharmacology teaching and learning session followed at Manipal College of medical sciences. Most of the textbooks that are commonly followed in Nepal merely tell about communication skills. In this lesson it is taught that how to speak/communicate with the patient right from the beginning when a student is admitted to the medical school. This activity makes the student confident.

Communication skill is included in the Kathmandu university syllabus [6]. Usually a total mark of 5-10 is allotted for this activity. A dummy patient is given during this lesson and student has to communicate with the patient. The language that is followed for communication is English and time allotted is 3 minutes.

**Methods**

**Steps of Communication Skill:**

1. Definition
2. Non Pharmacological measures
3. Drug History
4. Drug Selection
5. Dose
6. Duration
7. Administration
8. Adverse effects
9. Feedback
10. Follow up
11. Encouragement of Questions
12. Early visit if required
13. Clarity

**Example of a Communication Skill:**

The patient sitting in front of you is a 27 years / male, Jazz Gurung from Birgunj, Nepal is suffering from Malaria caused by *Plasmodium vivax*. The diagnosis is confirmed by blood picture. Select a suitable drug for him and communicate well regarding the use of the drug and treatment of the condition.

Step 1: Definition: Define the problem in a lay man terminology so that the patient can understand.

Step 2: Non Pharmacological measures – How to prevent from the disease/what are the prevention should be taken.

Step 3: Drug History- This is important to know about the drug interactions.

Step 4: Drug Selection-Select the drugs that is kept on the table and give it to the patient [7].

Step 5: Dose-proper dose is given to the patient [8].

Step 6: Duration- How long the medicines is to be taken.

Step 7: Administration-Which route has to be mentioned and it should be given before food or after food.

Step 8: Adverse effects- what are the adverse effects the medicine can cause, give caution to the patient.

Step 9: Feedback- Whether the patient can follow what the doctor is saying.

Step 10: Follow up- when patient need to come to visit the doctor for the next time.

Step 11: Encouragement of Questions-encourage the patient to ask few questions.

Step 12: Early visit if required-If the patient develops any complications/ hypersensitivity reactions they need to report earlier.

Step 13: Clarity- How clear the student communicate with the patient (score is given by the examiner).

**Communication skill**

Step 1: Mr.Gurung you are suffering from a disease called as malaria which is caused by the sting of the female anopheles mosquito that is characterized by fever, chills and headache.

Step 2: You need to use mosquito repellents cream and coil. Your surroundings should be clean, don't allow stagnant water collection near the house and use mosquito nets. You can use fishes in the pond like Gambusia which feed on the larva of the mosquito.

Step 3: Are you taking any medicines?

Step 4:Mr.Gurung you need to take Tab.Chloroquine Phosphate, Tab. Primaquine Phosphate and Tab. Paracetamol

Step 5: Tab. of Chloroquine is 250 mg= 150 mg base  
Take 4 tabs stat

After 6 hrs take 2 more tablets

Then 2nd day 2 tabs

3rd day 2 tabs.

Total duration of Chloroquine is 3 days.

After 3 days take Primaquine

1tab of Primaquine 26mg= 15 mg

Take one tab daily for 14 days

Along with that you have to take Tab. Paracetamol 500 mg  
Three times a day for 7 days.

Step 6 Total duration of Chloroquine is 3 days, Primaquine for 14 days, Paracetamol for 7 days.

Step 7: All the medicines has to be taken per orally after food.

Step 8: You can suffer from some adverse effects like nausea, vomiting, and abdominal pain but don't worry if you get such problems please contact me.

Step 9: Have you understood?

Step 10: You have to come for follow up after 3 days.

Step 11: Do you have any questions? Please repeat how to take the medicines?

Step 12: If you have any problem you can meet me any time.

Step 13: Clarity.

**Abbreviations**

MBBS: Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery, MCOMS: Manipal College of Medical Sciences, MD: Doctor of Medicine, Tab: Tablet

**Competing interests**

The author does not have any conflict of interest arising from the study.

**Authors' contribution**

IB designed the study, drafted the manuscript, revised it and finalized the paper.

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